

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A-1

WASHINGTON POST

3 July 1983

# White House Drops Probe Of Debate Book

By Lou Cannon and Howard Kurtz  
Washington Post Staff Writers

The White House has given the FBI names of potential suspects who may have provided documents from the Carter White House to the Reagan campaign organization in 1980, and has dropped its own inquiry into the matter, administration officials said yesterday.

White House counsel Fred F. Fielding has sent a memo to several hundred persons involved in the Reagan presidential campaign directing them immediately to give the Justice Department any information they have, officials said. They added that Fielding's office would no longer play an active role in the inquiry except when asked to do so by the department.

Fielding's office is bowing out of the inquiry, said officials, to "avoid confusion" with the Justice Department investigation and with an inquiry by a House subcommittee headed by Rep. Donald J. Albosta (D-Mich.). The White House will continue to "cooperate fully" with both investigations, according to an official.

This official said the White House wants to help all it can but is concerned that continuing a separate investigation would be misinterpreted as an attempt to suppress potential evidence rather than produce it.

"There's a fine line to walk between stonewalling and cover-up," he added.

Meanwhile, high-level sources firmly discounted published reports of possible resignations by some administration officials. These reports have centered on Office of Management and Budget Director David A. Stockman, who has acknowledged that "pilfered" material assisted him in his preparation as a Carter stand-in during a Reagan rehearsal for the presidential debate, and on White House communications director David A. Gergen, who was coordinating debate preparation.

Gergen said he found Carter materials in his files a week after stating that he did not remember receiving the documents from James A. Baker III, who in 1980 was in charge of debate negotiations and is now White House

chief of staff. Baker has recalled receiving the documents from William J. Casey, then the Reagan campaign manager and now director of central intelligence, but Casey has said he has "no recollection" of seeing the material or giving it to anyone.

One official said there "isn't going to be any scapegoating" of Gergen. Another official said there has been no White House pressure on Stockman to resign.

While the president spent the holiday weekend in the seclusion of his California ranch, the prevalent attitude of the White House was to ride out the storm. One official said that "the president isn't going to jump to any conclusions" and that he believes that accounts of the incident may have been overblown by the press and Democratic partisans.

Yesterday, a Democratic senator who long has been critical of Casey's active stock trading during his tenure as CIA director called upon Casey to resign.

"I have consistently doubted the integrity of Bill Casey," said Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.).

DeConcini added that he thought the president "wants to get at the bottom of it," and he joined growing Democratic demands that a special prosecutor should be named.

Justice Department officials have said that Attorney General William French Smith will take this action if the investigation warrants it.

An administration official said yesterday that the White House wants to avoid "keeping the story going" pending the outcome of the investigations.

"The president's going to have as little to say possible," said a high-ranking administration official. "Some of us wished he hadn't said anything in the first place."

This was a reference to Reagan's original dismissal of the event as "much ado about nothing." Since

then, Reagan has called for the Justice Department inquiry, and White House spokesman Larry Speakes said in Santa Barbara yesterday that "the man [Reagan] is clear as a bell" that he wants a full investigation. On Friday, Speakes said Reagan would

be "totally responsive" to any question put to him by the FBI.

Albosta said yesterday that he

would attempt to resolve the discrepancies between the accounts of Casey and the White House aides.

"Certainly there's something there

in Mr. Casey's memory that seems to have gone blank," Albosta said on Cable News Network. "He could remember details during the hearings he had with the Senate on many items of . . . years back. I would think that Mr. Casey probably would be a very interesting witness before our committee."

In a separate interview on the same network, Carter's White House chief of staff, Hamilton Jordan, said disclosure of the incident during the 1980 campaign would have hurt Reagan's reputation for honesty.

If widespread publicity had been given to Stockman's statement to a Michigan audience on the day of the debate that he used "pilfered" documents to prepare Reagan, Jordan said, "I think that would have gone right against the image that President Reagan had developed of being an honorable, well-intentioned man."

But he said Carter still would have lost the election.

"I would contend the Reagan people did not do the honorable thing," Jordan said. "They received these materials, which I would have to classify as being stolen goods, and they utilized them."

"These papers belong to the president of the United States . . . They were removed from the White House by some person. That, I would think, is an illegal act . . . There were only about six or seven people that had copies of them. It was treated as a very sensitive political document."

Asked whether the incident was any different than commonplace leaks to reporters, Jordan said, "I think there's an enormous difference in someone leaking a document to a member of the press to get it into the public domain, and someone taking a political document, secretly, and giving to the political opposition for use in a quiet way in a presidential debate."